

Message Text

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ACTION L-02

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1502

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

USMISSION USUN

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CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, SF

SUBJ: SASO/BPC TRIAL

REF: (A) STATE 51709

(B) DURBAN 0099

1. IN AN ATMOSPHERE TENSE WITH ANTICIPATION AND EMOTION, THE 13 ACCUSED MARCHED INTO A STANDING-ROOM-ONLY SCENE OF JUBILATION, CHEERS, SONG AND CLENCHED FISTS IN THE USUNALLY STAID CHAMBERS OF THE PRETORIA SUPREME COURT TODAY. THE INITIAL SHOW OF FEELING RECIPROCATED BY THE PRINCIPALLY BLACK AUDIENCE OF SEVERAL HUNDRED FRIENDS AND RELATIVES CONTINUED FOR MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES WITHOUT INTERRUPTION OR INTERFERENCE WHATSOEVER FROM THE COURT OFFICIALS OR POLICE.

2. THE JUDGE ARRIVED, A JUDICIOUS 20 MINUTES LATE, AFTER WHICH ATTORNEY FOR THE DEFENSE, MR. ALLEWAY, BEGAN A WELL PREPARED

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AND OBVIOUSLY THOUGHT OUT PLEA FOR POSTPONEMENT UNTIL MAY 1.

THIS WENT ON FOR MORE THAN 20 MINUTES, IN ENGLISH, FOLLOWED BY THE PROSECUTION'S HALF-HEARTED PRO FORMA ATTEMPT AT CONVINCING THE COURT THAT THE TRIAL SHOULD PROCEED AS SCHEDULED. IN HIS REMARKS, PROSECUTOR REECE REFERRED TO THE "SIMPLE CHARGE OF CONSPIRACY" WHICH DREW SNICKERING FROM THE AUDIENCE AS WELL AS FROM THE JUDGE. (FYI PENALTY RANGES FROM 5 YEARS TO DEATH. END FYI) A COMPROMISE WAS REACHED, AND THE TRIAL DATE WAS FURTHER POSTPONED TO APRIL 21.

3. ALL THIS APPEARED TO BE SOMEWHAT ANTI-CLIMACTIC TO THE MORNING'S FINAL SCENE, HOWEVER. FOLLOWING THE JUDGE'S DEPARTURE FROM THE COURTROOM THERE ENSUED A DELAY OF SOME 15 MINUTES DURING WHICH THE ACCUSED WAVED TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS. WITH NO VISIBLE SIGNS OF HURRYING THEM ALONG TO WAITING TRANSPORTATION FROM THE COURTROOM, OFFICIALS ALLOWED THE AUDIENCE OF BLACKS TO APPROACH THE ACCUSED, AFTER WHICH MATTERS REALLY BEGAN TO GET OUT OF HAND. EVERYONE (BLACKS) APPEARED TO BE WAVING HANDS, KISSING AND EMBRACING WITH EVERYONE ELSE; ARMS, LEGS AND BODIES WERE INTERMINGLING TO THE POINT WHERE COMPLETE CHAOS COULD ONLY BE INEVITABLE.

4. CHAOS DID INDEED DEVELOP AND THE CROWD SUDDENLY SURGED FORWARD TO THE ACCUSED BOX. THE EMBOFF WAS NEARLY CRUSED BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS IN THE ONRUSH. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, POLICE AND PLAINCLOTHESMEN--WHO WERE LIBERALLY DISTRIBUTED THROUGHOUT THE CROWD--JOINED THE FRAY. AT THIS TIME THE 13 PRISONERS WERE PUSHED ALONG TO THE EXIT (STAIRWAY DESCENDING DIRECTLY FROM THE CENTER OF THE COURTROOM TO A BASEMENT) AND SOME OF THE MEN APPEARED TO RESIST THE MOVEMENT. THE AUDIENCE BEGAN PROTESTING THE ROUGH TREATMENT, ONE WOMAN COMMENTING TO NO ONE IN PARTICULAR AS SHE PASSED BY THE EMBOFF THAT "THEY ARE TURNING OUR CHILDREN INTO ANIMALS." THEY'LL PAY FOR THIS." WITH A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF FIRMNESS, ALTHOUGH NO CLUBS OR WEAPONS WERE USED, POLICE WERE FINALLY ABLE TO USHER ALL 13 OUT WITHOUT FURTHER INCIDENT. IT DID NOT APPEAR, HOWEVER, THAT ANYONE WAS INJURED IN THE FRACAS.

5. IN ADDITION TO EMBOFF, REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE SWEDISH AND BRITISH EMBASSIES WERE AMONG DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS. OTHERWISE, IT WAS DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY THE FEW OTHER WHITE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MEMBERS AMONG A PREDOMINATLY BLACK AUDIENCE.
HURD

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